

Variety
Mpls Star Tribune
Nov 26, 2021



The famous 1969 rooftop concert is shown in its entirety during the new documentary "The Beatles: Get Back."

Apple Corps Ltd./Disney

A long and winding journey

REVIEW: Peter Jackson's Beatles documentary includes enthralling footage with the tiniest details.

By NEAL JUSTIN • neal.justin@startribune.com

Few music fans would hail "Let It Be" as the Beatles' finest work. But the album marked an important chapter in the band's history. Legend has it that the 1969 recording sessions marked the beginning of the group's demise.

"The Beatles: Get Back," which debuted Thursday on Disney Plus, neither confirms nor contradicts that theory. If anything, it only muddies the waters.

Director Peter Jackson, who won an Oscar for the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, is more interested in pumping up the jam than pointing fingers. For those who love the Fab Four, or pop music in general, it's essential viewing.

The three-part documentary clocks in at nearly eight hours, but budget at least 10 hours to watch it all. There are just too many magical moments you'll want to replay. Culled from more than 60 hours of film and 150 hours of audio, the footage includes tiny details that will delight and amaze even the most die-hard followers.

You get early versions of future hits like "Another Day" and "All Things Must Pass." George Harrison introduces "Something" with the rubbish lyric "attracts me like a pomegranate." Ringo Starr cracks up his bandmates with the opening verse of "Octopus's Garden."

For "Get Back," once conceived as a song supporting immigrants, Paul McCartney and John Lennon consider giving Jojo the last name of Pakistani.

See **BEATLES** on E2 ▶

A long and winding journey

◀ **BEATLES** from El Lennon struggles with a song called "Road to Marrakesh" that would later morph into his solo hit "Jealous Guy."

You hear Lennon and McCartney resurrect "Thinking of Linkin'" and "Fancy My Chances With You," ditties they wrote when they were teenagers.

It's no surprise to hear the lads noodle on Chuck Berry classics and Bob Dylan numbers like "I Shall Be Released" and "Mama, You've Been on My Mind." But you may do a double take when they launch into Canned Heat's "Going Up the Country" and the instrumental "Harry Lime Theme" from the 1949 film "The Third Man."

Those covers seem to serve as both motivators and tension relievers. And there was plenty of tension to be broken in the first week.

As was previously documented in Michael Lindsay-Hogg's 1970 film "Let It Be," Harrison spent the initial days at Twickenham Studios falling deeper and deeper into a

funk, bristling as McCartney treated him like a student in a high school orchestra.

"I think I'll be leaving the band now," he says near the end of Part 1.

But differences are eventually resolved and the group gets back to business, something Lindsay-Hogg's film failed to fully get across. That movie led to other misconceptions, as well.

If Yoko Ono's constant presence was the source of frustration, it doesn't really show this time around.

At one point, McCartney and keyboardist Billy Preston gleefully play along as she screams into the microphone. In one of the film's more touching moments, Lennon and Ono waltz across the studio as Harrison tries out "I Me Mine."

In a few of the early sessions, Lennon shows up late but he's mostly a trouper, even when playing second fiddle to his writing partner. His wicked sense of humor is well on display in Part 2 as he sends up early hits like "You're

Going to Lose That Girl" and "Help!"

Lennon's antics are all too much for actor Peter Sellers, who pops by shortly after Harrison's temporary departure. When the bespectacled Beatle tries to lure him into an absurd comedy routine, the "Dr. Strangelove" star quickly finds an excuse to vanish.

Heather, the daughter of Linda Eastman, McCartney's future wife, is a more amiable visitor. All the band members find time to goof around with the giggling 8-year-old, even as the album's deadline draws near.

If there's a villain in the film, it's Lindsay-Hogg. At times, he behaves like a full-fledged member of the band, interjecting himself into the creative process. He insists to Eastman that he's a bigger fan of the group than she is.

One gets the feeling that Jackson included that scene as a poke at his predecessor for distorting the true nature of the sessions. (The Beatles would stay together after "Let It Be" and long enough

to record the superior "Abbey Road.")

For casual fans, a good chunk of the project will come across as a bit of slog. They may yawn after hearing the umpteenth version of "Don't Let Me Down" and the band's debate of whether or not to do a rooftop concert. That 40-minute performance, shown in its entirety during Part 3, will be a letdown for those who would rather hear "She Loves You" than "Dig a Pony."

For viewers more interested in the greatest hits, there are better options. "The Beatles Anthology," which aired on ABC in 1995, remains the most thorough TV project on the band's legacy. For something fresher, check out Hulu's "McCartney 3, 2, 1" in which famed music producer Rick Rubin gets Paul to dive deep on the songwriting process.

But if your primary interest is the interaction among the four musicians, "Get Back" sets the bar at a new height. It won't let you down.

Twitter: @nealjustin • 612-673-7431

with e
Simon
the Mi
a gift o
of hurt
sold m
especi

Trump
ref A
n av
atu

CON

Sue Can
itor/Fea
Sue.can
673-403

Tim Car
tcampb
673-486